

STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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THE IMPACT OF LEADERS ON ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: A 75TH RANGER REGIMENT CASE STUDY

BY

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ABSTRACT

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Organizational founders and initial leaders have lasting impact on organizational culture through the transformation of their initial beliefs and values into basic underlying assumptions. Their initial beliefs and values when proven successful over a period of time become embedded in the organizational culture and are taught to new members as the correct way to think and believe in certain situations. In the 75th Ranger Regiment, the initial beliefs and values of MG Kenneth C. Leuer and GEN Wayne A Downing have become embedded and have been sustained for 23 years. Throughout the organization's history since 1974, neither internal nor external changes in missions, tasks and organization have measurably altered the culture. The sustainment of the culture is largely attributable to leader succession decisions which were influenced by MG Leuer and later GEN Downing. The successive leaders renewed the existing values and basic assumptions. The Army, in its current period of transition, can learn from the successful establishment and sustainment of the Ranger Regiments culture.

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In the fall of 1973, the Chief of Staff of the Army General (GEN) Creighton

Abrams provided the following guidance when activating the 1st Ranger Battalion:

"The battalion is to be an elite, light, and the most proficient infantry battalion in the world. A battalion that can do things with its hands and weapons better than anyone. The battalion will contain no "hoodlums or brigands" and if the battalion is formed from such persons it will be disbanded. Wherever the battalion goes, it must be apparent that it is the best."¹

For last 23 years the rangers of the initial two battalions and later the 75th Ranger Regiment have lived GEN Abrams vision and in the words of the former Commander in Chief (CINC) United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) General Wayne A. Downing "...always get better, they never step back. The battalions are far beyond what we ever thought possible 23 years ago."² The Regiment has produced 26 general officers, 18 of whom serve on active duty today, and at least 19 senior leader Command Sergeants Major (CSM) including two Sergeants Major of the Army (SMA) and the current CSM for US Atlantic Command (USACOM) (see appendices 1 and 2).

The modern era Rangers have served in every ground combat operation since their activation in 1974 and have decisively accomplished each mission assigned. As our senior leaders grapple with the organizational structure and missions of Army Force XXI, examining the unique culture of this organization can provide insight about the creation and sustainment of a highly successful military organization.

"Organizations are created by people and the creators of organizations also create culture through the articulation of their own assumptions. Although the final form of an organization's culture reflects the complex interaction between the thrust provided by the founder, the reactions of the group members and their shared historical experiences, there is little doubt that the initial shaping force is the personality and the belief system of the founder."³

"Once an organization has evolved a mature culture because it has had a long rich history, that culture creates the patterns of perception, thought, and feeling of every new generation in the organization and therefore, also "causes" the organization to be

predisposed to certain kinds of leadership. In that sense, the mature group, through its culture, also creates its own leaders. As scholars we must understand this paradox: leaders create cultures, but cultures in turn create their next generation of leaders.”⁴

This paper’s thesis is that the founders and initial leaders established and built the culture of the US Army Rangers that remains intact after 23 years. The early leaders set the foundation which was subsequently reinforced and in some cases amplified by successive leaders of the battalions, the regiment and the general officers who remained in the *community*.

Using existing organizational culture and leadership theory, I will examine the Ranger culture from 1974 to the present. First, I will analyze the current culture in terms of artifacts, espoused values, and basic underlying assumptions.⁵ Second, identify the initial guidance from the Army Senior Leadership to Major General Kenneth C. Leuer and how he interpreted and transmitted that guidance, along with his own belief system, to the 1st Ranger Battalion. Third, discuss how the culture was established. Fourth, report how the successive leaders embedded, reinforced and amplified the culture. Fifth, explain an extraorganizational factor-the leader selection process. Sixth, draw conclusions about the culture’s strengths and weaknesses. Finally, based on the analysis, offer recommendations to Ranger, Special Operation’s Force (SOF) and Army leaders.

In preparation, it is important to understand what culture is and its interaction with leadership in organizations.

“The culture of a group can now be defined as: A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to

be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.”⁶

It is also important to differentiate climate from culture and to understand the inter-relation between climate and culture. If you describe climate as the membership's interpretation of organizational policies, practices and procedures and culture as the membership's shared beliefs and values, then what members believe and value influences their interpretation of policies, practices and procedures. Climate and culture are interconnected. Therefore, insuring the sustainment of organizational change is facilitated when the climate and the culture are in consonance.⁷

LEVELS OF CULTURE

In order to analyze Ranger culture, it will be instructive to look at what I have observed over nine and one half years from 1980 through 1996 in three Ranger units from company through regimental level. I will describe culture through Schein's prism of artifacts, espoused values, and basic underlying assumptions.

Artifacts

“...Artifacts... include all the phenomena that one sees, hears and feels when one encounters a new group with unfamiliar culture.” This level of culture is easy to observe but difficult to understand.⁸

As you enter each Ranger headquarters you are immediately struck by the security fence which surrounds the compound and notice in close proximity a large physical training area with towers, climbing ropes, sawdust pits, and aircraft mock-ups. The Rangers wear high and tight haircuts, distinctive black berets, starched camouflaged fatigues and jungle boots. During physical training (PT) you will notice the solid black

PT uniform with distinctive red scrolls. You will hear them recite the Ranger Creed daily at PT formation.

Immediately you feel something unique; you hear privates addressing superiors as PFC, Specialist, Sergeant or sir. The discipline and hierarchy become readily apparent; you are aware that these men seem different, apart from the rest of the Army. They challenge your presence in their area yet, greet you with stern courtesy. They salute crisply when an officer approaches, sounding off with "Rangers lead the way, sir!" with the officer responding "All the way."

You enter the headquarters, with highly visible distinctive sign or a Ranger scroll (a large replica of the unit sleeve insignia) and notice a bronze plaque naming the building after a fallen former commander. Inside, on the wall you read "The Ranger Creed", a statement of values written by the first CSM of the 1st Ranger Battalion and beside it you find charters from three Army Chiefs of Staff (see appendices 4-6).

You find plaques honoring Soldiers and NCOs of the Month and Quarter, and pictures of fellow Rangers in combat and training. In a place of honor in each unit you notice monuments, plaques, pictures, and rooms honoring comrades who were killed in combat and training. You gain a clear feeling that sacrifice, giving 100%, and remembering fallen Rangers is a way of life.

As you tour the arm's room, communication's room and motor pool you find unique weapons with lasers, taclights and night vision sights mounted, satellite radios, global positioning devices, stinger missile night sights, British land rover vehicles called Ranger Special Operations Vehicles (RSOVs) and Swedish made Carl Gustav anti -tank weapons dubbed by the Rangers as RAAWs or Ranger Anti-Armor Weapons.

While visiting training, you observe realistic high intensity live-fire training exercises replicating the sights, sounds, fear and stress of combat.

Finally, you notice these men in large number dip tobacco, cuss, and communicate forcefully; everything seems done with a sense of purpose. Without question you have a *feel* for the unit; like you're around a special or *elite* group of men .

Rituals

If you spend enough time with the Rangers you will observe certain unique rituals. Recitation of the Ranger Creed is a traditional part of Ranger special activities; each day begins with PT and the Ranger Creed. On each of the three combat jumps into Salines Point Grenada and the two drop zones in Panama at Rio Hato and Torrijos-Tocumen Airport, many jumpmasters led the creed over the aircraft intercom before the drop. It is part of every event that requires courage, moral strength, or unity of purpose. Listening to a battalion recite the creed provides an awareness of the bond between the men and the strength it provides.

A second Ranger ritual is the ceremonial remembrance of fallen comrades. The memorial services are emotional, gut wrenching testimonies from comrades, followed by the Ranger Creed, final roll call, volleys and taps. Rangers insure that they bury their own dead, honor them and support their loved ones. This signifies the respect accorded to one who exhibits service and sacrifice above self.

These *artifacts* are visible products of the group's culture and will be more easily understood as we examine the espoused values of the organization.

Espoused Values

Values in new organizations are normally the founder's or initial group leaders'

assumptions of what is right or wrong. The continued success of those assumptions over time transforms some of them through a process of “cognitive transformations” into shared values or beliefs among the group’s members. These shared values ultimately become the underlying assumptions which often become transparent in the culture and are taken for granted. Not all values undergo the transformation.⁹

The Ranger Creed embodies many of the initial beliefs and espoused values (see Appendix 3). It promotes: voluntary service, acceptance of professional hazards, and loyalty to unit, acknowledged elitism and expectations of the highest level of proficiency for country; commitment, physical readiness, mental alertness, moral correctness, loyalty to comrades, a special selection process, a demanding training regimen, courtesy to superiors, care of equipment, neatness of dress, setting the example; commitment to victory on the battlefield, refusal to surrender, refusal to leave a fallen comrade, commitment to never embarrass the country and the intestinal fortitude to complete the mission even as the lone survivor.

The values framed include: discipline; adherence to the highest standards; striving for excellence; loyalty to fellow Rangers, unit and country; mental toughness; and an indomitable will to accomplish the mission whatever the circumstances.

Other conscious values include: integrity and honesty among members of the unit, the importance of individual physical readiness, the safe execution of training, live fire training as the premier technique to insure combat readiness, not wasting time and effort on individuals who won’t make it-identify and eliminate them from the organization, Ranger school is a critical leader development tool, the Regiment is the best place to serve, no miscreants will remain in the organization, Rangers are self-

motivated and should meet standards without much help from leaders, negative motivation through physical and mental stress, and threats is effective and works faster than positive motivational techniques, trust and hold NCOs accountable for their responsibilities, Ranger leaders should return to the Army to impart what they have learned in the Regiment.

Sub-cultures

The values above are accepted and embraced by different sub-cultures in varying degrees. Ranger units have three subcultures: Officer and senior NCO grades E-8/E-9 (transitional executives), NCOs from Corporal to Sergeant First Class (Ranger course qualified and previous Ranger unit experienced long term middle management), and candidates E-1 to E-4 (non-Ranger qualified), sergeants, lieutenants and captains with no previous Ranger assignments.

These sub-cultures are similar to the three sub-cultures Schein identifies in every organization: executive, engineering and operator. The Ranger sub-cultures share many of the same similarities and challenges at the executive and operator levels. The engineering level doesn't exist separately; new ideas and technologies are introduced at the transitional executive and long term middle management level.¹⁰

The values embraced by each sub-culture work for their level of the organization; for example, returning to Army to impart the Ranger standards works for officers, first sergeants and sergeants major because their tours of duty are finite, normally two years. There are no positions for them in the organization once they have completed their specific assignment. They must return to the conventional Army to either become

command qualified at the next level and then attempt to return to the Rangers or to remain in the conventional army for the rest of their careers. The long term middle management NCOs, however, don't want to leave because: there is still upward mobility, they historically get promoted faster in the regiment and they fear going to other units with less resources, less emphasis on training, and less autonomy as an NCO. In the Ranger culture, the NCO enjoys expert power based on technical and tactical proficiency coupled with longevity in the unit. His views carry more weight than those senior to him, especially transitory officers with less experience and time in the Rangers. This degree of power is seductive and is not easily given up. Finally, NCOs fear that they may not be able to get back into the regiment if they leave.

The espoused value, that Rangers should return to the Army to impart what they have learned in the Regiment, creates friction between the transitional executives and the long term middle management sub-cultures. It has become a basic assumption for the officers and it remains a non-embraced espoused value for the other sub-cultures within the organization.

Basic Assumptions

"When a solution to a problem works repeatedly, it comes to be taken for granted. What was once a hypothesis, supported only by a hunch or a value, comes to be gradually treated as a reality...Basic assumptions...have become so taken for granted that one finds little variation within the cultural unit."¹¹

In the Ranger culture certain shared values have become basic assumptions. The first basic assumption is that if you fail to meet standards whether physical, moral, training, conduct, regulatory or safety, then you will be expelled from the organization.

The Rangers have had unconditional relief authority since their initial cadre training period in 1974; the authority was required to rapidly develop a proficient unit without spending extra time on the unmotivated or less gifted volunteers. The practice has remained since then but is no longer required because the unit is trained and ready, and the Army's current transfer and elimination procedures can do the job.

The second basic assumption is that all Ranger commanders and platoon leaders must be previous successful commanders or platoon leaders in other infantry units prior to assuming duties. Where this provision has been waived for second lieutenants the NCOs have not supported the decision. It was initially considered for NCO leadership positions as well but there was a shortage of volunteers in the early years of the organization. From 1975-1977 the Army's support of the Rangers with qualified officers and NCOs was not forthcoming and the results were disastrous, reinforcing the initial command qualification assumption.¹²

Third, self-discipline and mental toughness are absolute requirements for Rangers. Intrinsic motivation and continual pursuit of excellence are taken for granted.

Fourth, collective training must replicate the stress of combat.

Fifth, a highly stressful (antagonistic) training and living environment produces rapid learning and increased retention. Application of stress through extra physical training, verbal harassment and humiliation is an acceptable motivational technique.

Sixth, the Ranger course is an imperative tool for leader development and for removing potentially weak leaders from Regiment. Failure to pass the Ranger course is considered an embarrassment and causes reassignment from the organization. The Ranger course has become a rite of passage providing entry into the *brotherhood*.

Seventh, the socialization process has been successfully executed through the following organizational structures: Ranger Indoctrination Program (RIP), a three week course to teach basic skills, history, values and Standing Operating Procedures (SOP) as well as physical readiness testing to meet initial standards; Pre-Ranger Training, a three week course to prepare candidates for the Ranger course, failure to pass Pre-Ranger prohibits attendance at the Ranger Course; and the Ranger Assessment and Selection Program, a two week assessment for officers and NCOs entering the Regiment composed of psychological testing, leadership assessment and physical standards testing.

In addition to the unique Ranger socialization structure, like other Army units, Rangers conduct promotion boards to select sergeants and staff sergeants. Recently, the Regiment has added a Team Leader Training Course, a three day professional development program that must be completed prior to assuming team leader duties. Lastly, the Regiment uses a battalion level NCO review board conducted at 90 days and 18 months into new duty positions to provide feedback and decide whether particular NCOs will remain in the organization.

Eighth, leader development is key to the Regiment's continued success and proficiency in the future.

Ninth, focus on the basics in training, critical individual tasks at squad and platoon battle drills supporting the company Mission Essential Task List (METL).

While not all encompassing, this framework captures the essence of Ranger culture in 1996. To more clearly understand why this culture has evolved, I will look back to the state of the Army in 1974 when the battalions were formed.

INITIAL GUIDANCE

The condition of the United States Army in February 1974 was abysmal, the NCO corps had been ravaged by the Vietnam War and the Army was withdrawing from Vietnam in defeat. The *draft* had just been eliminated and the *volunteer army* was in its infancy with great question as to its potential success. The quality of soldiers in the Army was poor; there were few NCOs and fewer with any long term experience. Recruitment and retention rates were at all time lows. In this context, the new Chief of Staff (CSA) General Creighton Abrams and his deputies at Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) and Forces Command (FORSCOM) set upon a course to rebuild and restructure the Army.

In a meeting held 21 January 1974, GEN Abrams provided his guidance for the reactivation of the US Army Ranger Battalions (inactive as battalions since World War II):

- A foot Infantry Battalion
- Finest in the world
- An outfit that can do the kind of job suitable for a platoon, company and/or battalion of Infantry. The battalion would be capable of insertion by parachute, boat, aircraft.
- It would be composed of highly skilled, dedicated people and would be capable of seizing something we wanted quickly.
- ...Would not contain hoodlums who could cause an endless series of disciplinary problems [sic].¹³

This guidance was captured and published in an unsigned charter from the CSA now known by all Rangers as *the Abrams Charter* (see appendix 4). At the end of January 1974, the Army selected the commander tasked with forming the new Ranger battalion, Major General (then Lieutenant Colonel (LTC)) Kenneth C. Leuer. MG Leuer received further guidance from GEN Depuy (CG, TRADOC) upon selection for the

position. In a forty-five minute meeting at Lawson Army Airfield at Fort Benning, GEN

Depuy gave the following guidance:

- The Gold Medal Infantry of the world
- Be professional
- Have a code of conduct
- Have rites of passage
- Be disciplined to the highest degree
- Have their own march music
- Have assets such that it would never be drained by taskings
- Have the freedom to select personnel from throughout the Army
- If recruits don't make it, they will be dropped and returned to units
- If the concept doesn't work the unit will be disbanded immediately ¹⁴

Generals Abrams and Depuy focused on Rangers being the best skilled infantry in the world, disciplined, properly resourced, and free from bureaucratic and administrative obstacles to success. It was clear if these goals were not achieved the unit would be disbanded. In order to be the role model unit that would pull the Army from the depths of disarray, it was imperative that this initiative be successful.

ESTABLISHING THE CULTURE

MG Kenneth C. Leuer received minimal guidance while forming the Rangers yet, was able to understand the vision and translate it into reality.

Abram's Charter

Although never specifically told that the Rangers were to be a role model for the Army; MG Leuer sensed that mission in his conversations and coordination with senior leaders. He felt strongly that the Rangers would provide a specific capability: the ability to execute missions with the highest proficiency in less than 48 hours. Further, he believed that the leaders trained in the Ranger battalions should return to the Army passing their expertise and experience to their next units.¹⁵

This belief (myth) has come to be known as fulfilling the Abram's charter and has become an underlying assumption for the officers and senior NCOs in today's Rangers. MG Leuer expected the Ranger battalions to have a short term life; historically, they had been disbanded once their purpose was accomplished. He did not realize in 1974 that two of his assumptions about proficiency and immediate readiness would create a niche for Rangers that continues today.

Doctrinal Statement and TOE

The Army directed adequate resourcing; however, MG Leuer's assumptions operationalized the directive. He required: Ranger commanders have previous successful command experience, Ranger Officers and NCOs be graduates of the Ranger Course, and the battalion be assigned ten percent over-strength to insure that schooling and injuries would not draw the unit below authorized strength. Further, the commander was given authority to reassign without question those personnel who did not meet unit standards; no retraining, no administrative roadblocks, just move them out. These assumptions were codified in the Table of Authorizations and Equipment (TOE) and in the doctrinal statement for the Ranger Battalions insuring their continuation into the future.¹⁶

Performance Oriented Training

Training would be the Rangers number one focus. Two values instilled in Rangers by MG Leuer were standards and discipline. In his duties at Fort Benning prior to assuming command, MG Leuer wrote training doctrine for Performance Oriented Training, which means there is a standard published for every task assigned to individuals and units. MG Leuer and the cadre of the 1st Ranger Battalion validated this doctrine for

the Army and wrote the collective and individual Tasks, Conditions and Standards (TCS) for each mission the battalion was to perform.¹⁷

This process and the exercises that followed provided short term successes for the Rangers. Their proficiency increased and in each external evaluation or exercise they received praise and compliments for their performance. The Army adopted the Ranger documents using them to compile the first Skill Qualification Manuals and tests. When the Skill Qualification Test (SQT) program followed, the high scores achieved by Ranger NCOs again reinforced the training process. Providing short term successes is key to embedding values and assumptions.¹⁸

Writing their own training manuals and standards would continue for the Rangers and in his 1984 charter (see appendix 5) for the Rangers CSA GEN Wickam would task the Ranger Regiment to “lead the way in developing tactics, training techniques, and doctrine for the Army’s light infantry” and “be deeply involved in the development of Ranger doctrine.”¹⁹

Realism in Training

Conducting live fire training to enhance realism, stress and increase proficiency was another Leuer belief; the unit training program contained many live fire exercises (LFX) and focused at the squad level on ambushes and battle drills. LFX training exercises trained leader and Ranger alike and external evaluations and combat in Grenada, Panama, Desert Storm and Somalia have proven the success of the live fire training program embedding it deeply in the culture as a visible artifact.

In fact, later in our history when Joint Readiness Training Center rotations were introduced, the hue against blank fire and Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement Systems

(MILES) training was overwhelming. The Rangers have become very adept at LFX training and have written a number of SOPs and Policy letters defining how maneuver live fires will be executed. These were evolutionary guidelines for safety purposes as LFX training became more complex. At Ft Benning the 3d Battalion rewrote the post's live fire annex to the Range Regulations (App H, USAIC Reg 210-4).

Thinking Leaders and Battle Drills

MG Leuer further believed in the development of thinking leaders. He believed if the individual and small unit collective tasks were drilled to rote perfection then smart leaders at squad and platoon level need only analyze the situation and individual Rangers would be able to execute rapidly. Again, this idea came from emerging infantry doctrine; it was validated by Rangers and became today's infantry battle drills. MG Leuer felt that to insure survival, we must be able to execute missions successfully within 48 hours of notification. This capability could not be matched in the infantry, air assault or airborne divisions and only the dedicated, well resourced Ranger training program could produce this capability. MG Leuer referred to this as "simplistic perfection."²⁰

NCO Responsibility

MG Leuer and the officers in 1st Battalion believed in giving the NCOs the authority to execute their missions and in holding them accountable for their duties. Their Vietnam experience, where officers intruded into NCO duties, drove this belief. Competent NCOs, who were trusted by their officers, proved successful in the Ranger battalions. The results were visible and rapid; in short order the quality of the NCOs in the Ranger battalions was apparent to all. This trust in NCOs has continued through the

years and remains embedded. However, it sometimes prevents officers from challenging NCOs when negative leadership and harassment are employed.

Ranger Creed

“The Ranger Creed is a statement of some of the high priority values (fighting, training, character) of the Rangers”²¹. GEN Depuy directed the Rangers to have a code and the Ranger Creed (see appendix 3) answered the mail. The Ranger Creed, written by CSM Gentry (the initial CSM of 1st Battalion), captures in its six paragraphs the essence of being a Ranger and has been memorized by every Ranger since 1974. It has been recited daily at PT formations since MG Leuer instituted the practice in 1974. General Downing required the same at 2d Ranger Battalion in 1977 when he took over; oddly, 2d Ranger battalion did not adopt the Creed until then. The Creed also serves an important socialization function through its routine repetition. An example of its impact is the Battle of Bakara Market, 3 October 1993 in Mogadishu, Somalia. The downed helicopter of Chief Warrant Officer (CWO) Cliff Wolcott was secured by a Ranger platoon led by Lieutenant Tom DiTomasso who would not leave the site because they could not extract CWO Wolcott’s remains. The Ranger Creed states: “...I will never leave a fallen comrade to fall into the hands of the enemy, and under no circumstances will I ever embarrass my country.” On 4 and 5 Oct 1993 back at the staging base, CNN reports of a Task Force Ranger member’s remains being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu turned a tactical victory into a perceived demoralizing defeat because they had left fallen comrades at another crash site and had embarrassed their country.

Survival of the Fittest

As a result of the high standards, physical challenges and training intensity the

Ranger battalions had a significant number of wash outs in their growth years. Both General Downing and MG Leuer supported elimination of the failures as opposed to training them to standard. It is almost ironic that an Army value like training to standard and one which eliminates those who fail to meet the standard, exist side by side. But in the 1974 the requirement, to rapidly train the battalions to standard, did not allow the luxury of training the marginal performers to achieve the standard. There was no time. Evolution of the practice has resulted in a cultural value that new Rangers must make it on their own. NCOs routinely complain about the quality of new Rangers after graduation from RIP. This survival of the fittest attitude further separates the candidates from the group and causes some Ranger NCOs to be less responsible for those new Rangers who are less gifted than they are for those who are more adept. A declining population of eighteen year olds and competition with colleges for quality recruits may cause future reductions in the talent pool. These facts coupled with the addition of *Consideration for Others* an Army value, may require more diligent policing of negative leadership techniques as well as more effort to motivate high quality candidates to remain with the unit.

Schein, Kotter and the Government Accounting Office studies indicate that the initial assumptions and beliefs of the founders have a major impact on the sustainment and development of organizational culture. MG Leuer has been arguably the most influential leader in formation of the Ranger culture. His initial assumptions and espoused values have become embedded into the culture and have persisted with minor changes for 23 years. While the culture matured so did the leaders who were developed by that culture; in succeeding years, those junior leaders from the early years have

returned to guide the Rangers through expansion and mission changes. Remarkably, there has been little change to the underlying assumptions, values and artifacts as the culture evolved.

SUCCESSIVE LEADERSHIP AND THE RANGER CULTURE

From 1974 to 1984 the leaders in the two Ranger battalions were a mixture of new officers and NCOs, veterans of the initial cadre, and home grown leaders who had served only in the Rangers. The culture was transmitted and sustained, and by the late 1970s battalion commanders and senior NCOs were now former Rangers. General Downing who was the original Operations Officer in 1st battalion was now the Commander of the 2d Battalion and BG Sherman Williford, the original operations officer from 2d battalion was the commander of the 1st Battalion. This reinforced the original assumptions and promulgated values proven successful under MG Leuer.

Operation Rice Bowl in 1980, the Iran Hostage Rescue Attempt, highlighted the need for Special Operations units and headquarters throughout the Department of Defense. The reputation of the soldiers who participated from 1st Ranger battalion insured the Rangers a future in the emerging community.

In the summer of 1984 the Ranger Regimental HQ was formed, followed shortly by activation of the 3d Battalion. Simultaneously, the Army created 1st Special Operations Command which assumed training and administrative responsibility for the Rangers from FORSCOM.

The 1984 expansion was due to Ranger successes during operation Urgent Fury in Grenada. The combat experience again validated the training techniques and assumptions that MG Leuer had initiated. The airfield seizure Tactics, Techniques and

Procedures (TTP) and TCS written by the two battalions remain in use today with little change from Desert One and Grenada. These documents formed the bedrock of the joint procedures used today by all SOF units. This mission analysis and TCS development cycle repeats itself throughout Ranger history with the same result; it is a product of the underlying assumption *train to established standards*.

New Guidance

GEN Downing was selected to be the initial Regimental Commander and received guidance from multiple sources including Secretary of the Army Marsh, GEN Wickam the CSA, GEN Thurman the VCSA, and GEN Cavasos at FORSCOM.

GEN Wickam endorsed previous guidance and added his own, the Wickam Charter (see appendix 5): be the spearhead for new tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP), equipment and concepts for the Light Infantry (LI). He was supportive and gave GEN Downing a blank check, telling him to report directly to him (CSA) with problems and progress. GEN Wickam's statements renewed the already embedded assumptions and were easily integrated into the existing culture.

GEN Cavasos told him to take charge of the three battalions and make them a regiment, not three independent battalions.²² This guidance would drive standardization of policies and procedures (artifacts) among the three battalions and the regimental headquarters for the first time.

Reinforcing the Initial Assumptions and Values

In discussing the role of leadership at organizational mid-life Schein offers:

"Once the organization has a substantial history of its own, the culture becomes more of a cause than an effect. The culture influences strategy, the structure, the procedures and the ways in which the group members will relate to each other....Leaders at this stage need

above all the insight to know how to help the organization evolve to whatever will make it most effective in the future.”²³

In making the three battalions a Regiment, GEN Downing would reinforce and renew the founding beliefs and assumptions that formed the bedrock of Ranger culture. Standards and discipline remained the two driving forces from 1st Ranger Battalion. The Ranger Creed remained intact except to change the word battalion to regiment where it appeared.

Structural Changes

GEN Downing made structural changes by consolidating the Ranger Indoctrination Program (RIP) at Ft Benning. He created the Ranger Orientation Program (ROP), for the officers and senior NCOs. Prior to 1984 there were no selection criteria or physical standards for entry into the battalions; GEN Downing standardized these programs. As in 1974, TCS were developed for the programs which endure today. The primary entry criteria at this time was physical; again, no surprise as physical ability was one of MG Leuer’s initial values. The criteria included a 12 mile roadmarch in 3 hours, a 5 mile run in 40 minutes and a 240 or better on the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) with at least 80 points in each event and 6 chin-ups. If you didn’t achieve or maintain the standard, you were reassigned. GEN Downing convinced FORSCOM to support the cadre for this activity with an additional TDA authorization.²⁴

The Sullivan Charter

As the years passed, the Rangers became more involved with the Special Operations Command. The basic skill requirements remained unchanged but the insertion techniques, equipment, and technology were on the cutting edge. As a result,

GEN Gordon R. Sullivan as CSA issued the Rangers an updated charter (see appendix 6) which reinforced the charters of the previous CSAs but added new dimensions. One new mission was to provide the connectivity between the Army's conventional and special operational forces. Further, he designated the Rangers as the National Command Authorities most potent and responsive strike force.²⁵

With GEN Sullivan reinforcing the Ranger's capabilities, they remained with one foot firmly planted in light infantry skills and the other in special operations. The need for smart, thinking, innovative leaders and soldiers was never higher. To create these new leaders, the Rangers' socialization structure continued to evolve.

The Ranger Assessment and Selection Program

The selection process has continued to develop since 1984 and is now two programs: RIP and the Ranger Assessment and Selection Program (RASP). RIP has remained constant for E-1 to E-4 with minor changes since 1984 but ROP evolved to become RASP. It is much more than a physical selection program. RASP, for E-5 and above, includes psychological testing, observation and assessment exercises, physical readiness testing and a board proceeding.

Implementation of RASP made Rangers the last special operations force to adopt a formal selection program including psychological testing and evaluation. This is clearly an organizational selection process designed to identify leaders who fit into the templated norms required for success in the Regiment. Although the Regimental senior leadership did not initially support the program, it was not resisted by the long term middle management level of the Rangers. RASP only affected former Ranger NCOs trying to return to the Regiment and did not immediately affect those in the organization.

RASP does reinforce the NCO culture which supports remaining in the regiment and not returning to the Army. The middle management NCOs see RASP as a potential obstacle to their ability to return to the regiment; so it reinforces their belief that they should remain.

The Abrams Charter has evolved in regard to Ranger leaders returning to the Army; the NCOs didn't buy into it. In the early 1970s, the initial NCOs would depart because they were worn out or injured and they would return to the Army. GEN Downing believes a new generation of NCOs grew up in the Regiment and thrived on the PT, the challenges, and the culture and they didn't want to leave because the conventional Army's challenges paled in comparison.²⁶

EXTRAORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS - LEADER SELECTION PROCESS

"Poor succession decisions at the top of companies are likely when boards of directors are not an integral part of the effort...Because the boards simply did not understand the transformations in any detail, they could not see the problem with their choice of successors."²⁷

Succession decisions for commanders at the Ranger battalion and regimental level are not executed during the Army Competitive Category Boards. Ranger Commanders are selected during a special mission unit (SMU) selection board procedure. The nominees are successful Infantry or Training Unit Commanders who have completed at least one year of battalion command. Most nominees have served in the Ranger Regiment or Battalions previously and performed well. You might say they were developed and identified by the Ranger culture. Clearly, these candidates were noticed by the current or past Battalion and Regimental Commanders. Nominees are identified by the Regimental Commander, the USASOC Commander, the Joint Special Operations

Command Commander, the USSOCOM CINC, PERSCOM and major commands in the Army. The nominees are screened and contacted for permission to be considered, then recommended to the board. The board membership is predominantly composed of general officers with Special Operations backgrounds and often includes generals who previously commanded or served in the Ranger Regiment. Unlike normal boards, the board members know who the nominees are in advance and often engage in discussions about the nominees with other generals and the nominee's current unit commanders. Once convened, the board may also engage in discussion about particular nominees. After decisions are made at the board, the selection list is reviewed by the senior SOF Commanders and sent to the CSA for approval.

In this SMU process the *board of directors* are involved and recommendations are sent to the board from commanders in the field who know the nominees and know what type leader is required in each unit. Current unit commanders, for example the Ranger Regiment Commander, recommend who will be slated against a particular battalion. Insuring selection of the right successor is a serious task on which the Special Operations Community expends considerable effort.

Just a cursory look at the history of Ranger Battalion and Regimental Commanders shows that MG Leuer and GEN Downing continued to influence the succession decisions after leaving the Rangers. Now that they have retired a new generation of general officers with Ranger Command experience are influencing the succession decisions; including: MG Kernan, MG Grange, MG Maher, BG Jackson and COL(P) Leszczynski, the current Regimental Commander. This new *board of directors* were all mentored by GEN Downing, directly or indirectly, throughout their careers.

This extraorganizational leader selection process has insured sustainment of the underlying assumptions, values and artifacts. The initial leaders, MG Leuer and GEN Downing, were able to select successors who understood and assimilated the Ranger culture into their leadership styles. The successive commanders at battalion and regimental level managed the culture through command climates that enhanced the positive values and eliminated or retarded the negative. Understanding the culture enabled the leadership to navigate through years of expansion, mission change, and external environment changes without losing focus on the goals and objectives of the organization.

CONCLUSION

“Organizational cultures are created by leaders, and one of the most decisive function’s of leadership may well be the creation, the management and-if necessary-the destruction of culture...In fact there is a possibility-underemphasized in leadership research-that the only thing of real importance that leaders do is create and manage culture.”²⁸

The Ranger culture, described in this paper, was created largely by MG Leuer; it was managed, directly or indirectly, since 1984 predominantly by GEN Downing. Both MG Leuer and GEN Downing insured the sustainment of the underlying assumptions and the values by influencing leader succession decisions. The following generations of leaders managed the culture through climates which guided the culture through evolutionary change in some values and artifacts. Ranger battalion and the regimental commanders managed the culture by paying close attention to the assumptions, values and artifacts they wanted to sustain or adjust. Leader involvement through participative presence and role modeling focuses the organization on what is most important. Ranger

commanders have always done this. The old adage that actions speak louder than words is true for the Rangers.

Ranger culture when viewed through the Army's current climate produces some positive and negative attitudes. The Ranger Regiment's most important product is leaders for the Infantry, Special Operations and other Army organizations. The culture that produced these leaders supports the Army's values as measured by promotion and command selection boards. The underlying assumptions: training to standard, discipline, previous command, realistic live fire training, high stress antagonistic training environment, graduation from the Ranger course, negotiating the socialization process, and focusing on the basic drills, have actually served as the Program of Instruction (POI) for the best leader development process in the Army. Creating and managing unit culture may be the best way to insure successful leader development.

There are negative attitudes about some aspects of the Ranger culture. The Army's recent addition of *Consideration Of Others* to its espoused values will conflict with some Ranger cultural values and artifacts. The combination of having high physical standards, a survival of the fittest socialization process, absolute discipline and a high stress antagonistic training environment has produced a tendency in some NCOs to use negative leadership techniques to motivate subordinates. Further, this blend of values may have created an inclination to ridicule, demean, harass and embarrass those who fail to meet the standards.

The young Ranger officers closest to these actions sometimes fail to take action because they are intimidated or have such blind trust that they assume the actions or indicators are acceptable in the Ranger environment. Senior Ranger leaders continue to

establish a climate aimed at eliminating this tendency but routinely it re-emerges when not uniformly policed.

Another cultural characteristic of the Rangers is the semi-permeable nature of the organization. It's tough to get into the unit; and if you don't conform to or assimilate the culture, it's even tougher to stay. The homogeneity of the unit has positive aspects; however, homogeneity with rigid discipline often stifles initiative and innovation which are two attributes required for success on the future battlefield.

Finally, the Ranger NCO corps is not returning to the Army as the CSA Charters direct. The young NCOs who don't remain in the unit normally leave the Army and the senior NCOs only return to the regular Army when forced to. Again, there are clear advantages to an experienced, professional, proven NCO corps in the Rangers but there is a down side to having only the Ranger experience. Often, exposure to high stress, high risk training will routinize the experience and produce over confidence. Certain groups in an organization can spend so long together that they create a sub-culture of their own which sometimes has norms and values in conflict with the parent organization. If a person has been in an organization so long that they do things because *that's the way its always been done*, then they are potentially dangerous, and at the minimum, resistant to change and innovation. Each of these statements describes a population of NCOs serving in the Rangers today.

The good news is that Ranger culture is viewed on the whole, both internally and externally, as positive, productive and imbued with the Army's highest standards. The present and future commanders must continue to manage that culture as the internal and external climates evolve.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After analyzing the Ranger culture, I offer the following recommendations to Ranger leaders, SOF leaders, and Army leaders.

Ranger Regiment Leaders

First, establish a sense of urgency about negative leadership practices and eliminate the tendency while retaining the standards, discipline and high intensity training. Kotters eight step process, in his book Leading Change, provides an excellent framework to follow (see appendix 7).

Second, the survival of the fittest attitude that served the Rangers well during years of high personnel resourcing may not work in the future. Diminishing candidate populations through 2005 which are competing with college recruiting may not provide a large enough reservoir of talent to cast off so many who volunteer. You face a choice between quantity and quality unless you choose to train more of the potential Rangers to achieve the standards.

Third, sustain the socialization structures: RIP, RASP, Pre-Ranger, the Ranger Course, and unit boards. Focus the processes to manage the culture toward your goals and objectives whether for sustainment or to implement change. Prevent NCOs from homesteading and open the door to new personnel and ideas into the organization.

Fourth, discipline can be the enemy of initiative and innovation. While striving to maintain discipline, create a climate where initiative within positional limits is encouraged and rewarded. Rote unquestioning discipline has a place but it should be well defined.

Special Operations Leaders

Special Operations Forces in our Army and throughout the joint community share much in common with the Ranger Regiment. All have a selection program which weeds out those not similar in beliefs and values to the organization. Most SOF forces, other than Rangers, are closed cultures where the members remain for their entire careers. Therefore, those negative cultural characteristics in the Rangers could exist in other SOF units. SOF forces, like the Rangers, have historically been disbanded following the wars they were created for; often because their cultures, developed in combat, were not acceptable in peace. The SOF community must be vigilant and manage unit climates to prevent values, assumptions and artifacts to develop that are not aligned with current and future Department of Defense and national values. A great deal of recent negative press about extremist group membership, prop-blast ceremonies and most recently blood wing rituals, sends the wrong message to the nation about our elite units. Without the support of the nation, SOF will not survive to provide the capability they have worked so hard to develop.

Army Leaders

My analysis of organizational culture, climate and leadership in the Rangers has enhanced my understanding of the impact of leaders on culture and the impact of leaders in fostering organizational change. The relationship in organizations among culture, climate and leadership is at the heart of organizational success. The Army needs to introduce this relationship more clearly in doctrine and earlier in the professional education system. Battalion Commanders need to understand culture and their role in managing it. The Command and General Staff College and the Pre-Command Course

must make this subject a higher priority. Professional literature on the topic explains the subject better than current military publications.

Most authors, writing about culture and leadership in relation to organizational change, state that to embed initial assumptions and values or to change them takes between three and ten years. Current command selection, slating and tour length policies do not support the process of embedding assumptions and values. There is little effort to insure a commander is assigned to a unit where he or she understands the culture. As a result, change occurs slowly in the Army due to the rapid rotation of leaders and commanders during periods of change. The Army should adopt a policy of returning battalion and brigade commanders to units where they have recent experience with the culture. In periods of dynamic change, consider extending command tour lengths to three or more years to embed changes. If we require new organizational structures with different missions in the Army of the twenty first century, then adopting command selection, assignment and tour length policies that enhance the change process is both prudent and wise.

Lastly, I recognize that my study and analysis may be biased based upon my nine and one-half years experience in the Rangers. Alternatively, this experience may have provided the necessary insights only possible by having served in the organization.

Appendix 1

General Officers Who Served in the 75th Rangers

Name	Units	Duty Position	Notes
MG Kenneth C. Leuer	1/75	Bn Cdr	1,8
MG Gerald H. Bethke	2/75	Bn Cdr	1
GEN Wayne A. Downing	1/75, 2/75, 75	Bn S3, Bn Cdr, Reg Cdr	4,5,6
LTG Jared L. Bates	2/75	Bn XO	1,7
LTG James T. Scott	1/75	Bn Cdr	1,5
MG William F. Kernan, Jr.	2/75, 1/75, 75	Co Cdr, Bn Cdr, Reg Cdr	1
MG John J. Maher, III	2/75, 1/75	Co Cdr, Bn S3, Bn Cdr	1
MG Lawson W. Magruder, III	2/75	Co Cdr	9,11
MG Kenneth R. Bowra	2/75	Co Cdr	2,10
MG Jack P. Nix, Jr	1/75	Bn XO	
MG David L. Grange	1/75, 75	Co Cdr, Reg Cdr	
MG John M. LeMoyné	2/75	Bn S3	
BG Ronald F. Rokosz	1/75, 2/75, 75	Co Cdr, Bn Cdr, Reg XO	
BG James T. Jackson	2/75, 3/75, 75	Co Cdr, Bn Cdr, Reg Cdr	
BG James E. Mace	2/75	Bn Cdr	
BG Joseph S. Stringham	1/75, 75	Bn Cdr, Reg Cdr	2
BG Wesley B. Taylor	1/75, 75	Co Cdr, Bn Cdr, Reg Cdr	
BG Sherman Williford	2/75, 1/75	Bn S3, Bn Cdr	
BG Robert W. Wagner	2/75, 1/75, 75	Co Cdr, Bn Cdr, Reg S3	
BG Dell Dailey	1/75, 75	Reg S5	3
BG John R. Vines	1/75, 3/75	Co Cdr, Bn XO	
BG John P. Abizaid	1/75, 2/75	Co Cdr	
BG James Dubik	1/75, 2/75	Co Cdr	
BG Geoffrey Lambert	2/75, 75	Reg Plans Officer	
BG Frank J. Toney	2/75	Co Cdr	
COL(P) William J. Leszczynski	2/75, 75	Co Cdr, Bn XO, Reg Cdr	

Notes

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1-Division Commander 2-Special Forces Officer 3-Aviation Officer 4-CINCUSOCCOM 5-COMUSASOC 6-COMJSOC 7-The Army Inspector General 8-Chief of Infantry 9-Commander, Joint Readiness Training Center | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10-Commander Special Forces Command |
|--|---|

Appendix 2

Senior Level Command Sergeants Major Who Served in the 75th Rangers

Sergeant Major of the Army Glenn E. Morrell

Sergeant Major of the Army Julius Gates

Command Sergeant Major Jesse J. Laye, CSM, US Atlantic Command

Command Sergeant Major Jimmie Spencer, CSM, USASOC

Command Sergeant Major Andrew McFowler, CSM, XVIII Airborne Corps

Command Sergeant Major George Conrad, CSM, IX Corps

Command Sergeant Major Edward Palacios, CSM, III Corps

Command Sergeant Major George D. Mock, CSM, I Corps

Command Sergeant Major William H. Acebes, CSM, US Army Infantry Center

Command Sergeant Major Autrail Cobb, CSM, 5th Infantry Division

Command Sergeant Major Rocky Hauser, CSM, 7th Infantry Division

Command Sergeant Major Michael Pichete, CSM, 6th Infantry Division

Command Sergeant Major John Jones, CSM, 2d and 6th Infantry Divisions

Command Sergeant Major Steven England, CSM, 82d Airborne Division

Command Sergeant Major George Ponder, CSM, JRTC and Ft Polk

Command Sergeant Major Larry P. Rodriguez, CSM, 101st Airborne Division (AASLT)

Command Sergeant Major William J. Perry, CSM, US Army Field Artillery Center

Command Sergeant Major Gary Carpenter, CSM, 25th Infantry Division

Command Sergeant Major Jan Schalavin, CSM, 25th Infantry Division

Appendix 3

The Ranger Creed

Recognizing that I volunteered as a Ranger, fully knowing the hazards of my chosen profession, I will always endeavor to uphold the prestige, honor and high "esprit de corps" of my Ranger Regiment.

Acknowledging the fact that a Ranger is a more elite soldier who arrives at the cutting edge of battle by land, sea or air, I accept the fact that as a Ranger my country expects me to move further, faster and fight harder than any other soldier.

Never shall I fail my comrades. I will always keep myself mentally alert, physically strong and morally straight and I will shoulder more than my share of the task whatever it may be, one hundred percent and then some.

Gallantly will I show the world that I am a specially selected and well trained soldier. My courtesy to superior officers, neatness of dress and care of equipment shall set the example for others to follow.

Energetically will I meet the enemies of my country. I shall defeat them on the field of battle for I am better trained and will fight with all my might. Surrender is not a Ranger word. I will never leave a fallen comrade to fall into the hands of the enemy and under no circumstances will I ever embarrass my country.

Readily will I display the intestinal fortitude required to fight on to the Ranger objective and complete the mission though I be the lone survivor.

Appendix 4

The Abrams Charter

The battalion is to be an elite, light and the most proficient infantry battalion in the world.

A battalion that can do things with its hands and weapons better than anyone.

The battalion will contain no "hoodlums or brigands" and if the battalion is formed from such persons it will be disbanded.

Wherever the battalion goes, it must be apparent that it is the best.

GEN Creighton Abrams
Guidance when forming the
1st Ranger Battalion, Fall 1973

Appendix 5

The Wickam Charter

The Ranger Regiment will draw its members from the entire Army--after service in the Regiment--return these men to the line units of the Army with the Ranger philosophy and standards.

Rangers will lead the way in developing tactics, training techniques, and doctrine for the Army's Light Infantry formations.

The Ranger Regiment will be deeply involved in the development of Ranger Doctrine.

The Regiment will experiment with new equipment to include off-the-shelf items and share the results with the Light Infantry Community.

GEN John Wickam
Chief of Staff of the Army
Guidance to Commander, 75th Rangers
10 May 1984

Appendix 6

The Sullivan Charter

The 75th Ranger Regiment sets the standard for light infantry throughout the world. The hallmark of the Regiment is, and shall remain, the discipline and esprit of its soldiers. It should be readily apparent to any observer, friend or foe, that this is an awesome force composed of skilled, and dedicated soldiers who can do things with their hands and weapons better than anyone else. The Rangers serve as the connectivity between the Army's conventional and special operational forces.

The Regiment provides the National Command Authority with a potent and responsive strike force continuously ready for worldwide deployment. The Regiment must remain capable of fighting anytime, anywhere, against any enemy, and WINNING.

As the standard bearer for the Army, the Regiment will recruit from every sector of the active force. When a Ranger is reassigned at the completion of his tour, he will imbue his new unit with the Regiment's dauntless spirit and high standards.

The Army expects the Regiment to lead the way within the infantry community in modernizing Ranger doctrine, tactics, techniques, and equipment to meet the challenges of the future.

The Army is unswervingly committed to the support of the Regiment and its unique mission.

Gordon R. Sullivan
General, United States Army
Chief of Staff

Appendix 7

Kotter's Eight Step Process

1. Establishing a sense of urgency
2. Creating the guiding coalition
3. Developing a vision and strategy
4. Communicating the change vision
5. Empowering broad-based action
6. Generating short term wins
7. Consolidating gains and producing more change
8. Anchoring new approaches in the culture

ENDNOTES

- ¹ 75th Ranger Regiment, Command Brief (September 1996), 3.
- ² GEN (Ret) Wayne A. Downing, <WAYNE.A.DOWNING@cpmx.saic.com>, "FWD>Re[2]" electronic mail message to LTC Frank Kearney, <kearneyf@carlisle-emh2.army.mil>, 9 January 1997.
- ³ Edgar H. Schein, Organizational Culture and Leadership (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1985), 319.
- ⁴ Ibid., 313.
- ⁵ Ibid., 17.
- ⁶ Edgar H. Schein, Organizational Culture and Leadership, 2d ed. (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1992), 12.
- ⁷ Benjamin Schneider, Arthur P. Brief and Richard A. Gunzo, "Creating a Climate and Culture for Sustainable Organizational Change," Organizational Dynamics 24, no. 4 (Spring 1996): 9.
- ⁸ Schein, Organizational Culture and Leadership, 17.
- ⁹ Ibid., 19-21.
- ¹⁰ Edgar H. Schein, "Three Cultures of Management: The Key to Organizational Learning," Sloan Management Review 38, no. 1 (Fall 1996): 13-15.
- ¹¹ Schein, Organizational Culture and Leadership, 21-22.
- ¹² Downing e-mail.
- ¹³ Robert M. Cronin, "Rangers of the 80's," Unpublished Essay for the Armed Forces Staff College, 15 November 1982, 1.
- ¹⁴ MG (Ret) Kenneth C. Leuer, CEO Goodwill Industries, telephone interview by author, 23 December 1996.
- ¹⁵ Leuer, telephone interview.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ John P. Kotter, Leading Change (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 21.
- ¹⁹ 75th Ranger Regiment, 4.
- ²⁰ Leuer telephone interview.
- ²¹ Downing e-mail.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Schein, Organizational Culture and Leadership, 319.
- ²⁴ Downing e-mail.
- ²⁵ 75th Ranger Regiment, 5.
- ²⁶ Downing e-mail.
- ²⁷ Kotter, 14.
- ²⁸ Schein, Organizational Culture and Leadership, 2.

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